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PRESS RELEASE

World Hypertension Day 2022

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World Hypertension Day is observed annually each year on May 17 to raise awareness and promote hypertension prevention, detection and control. This year's theme is "Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer."

Last year, the Ministry of Health & Wellness, through the Nutrition Unit and in collaboration with the Public Health Unit, embarked on a Salt Reduction/Healthy Eating Campaign, with an aim to educate cooks and food vendors on the dangers of excessive sodium use and to promote healthy cooking options. Through this campaign, the ministry also aimed to raise awareness of the link between disease and unhealthy meal preparation and to promote healthier cooking tips for the general population. The campaign will continue throughout the year with a rollout to larger businesses around the country. Other activities for this year include countrywide blood pressure and body mass testing, and sharing of salt reduction tips.

Hypertension or high blood pressure is one of the main risk factors for heart disease. Recent statistics in Belize show that both hypertension and heart disease are among the leading causes of mortality with 329 deaths attributed to hypertension over the last five years.

Key risk factors contributing to hypertension include being overweight, limited physical activity and eating foods high in salt. Salt can be found in many different foods; however, excessive salt is seen in processed foods such as bacon, chopped ham, salami, cheese, and instant noodles, among others. The World Health Organization recommends that adults consume less than five grams (just under a teaspoon) of salt per day in order to reduce the risk of high blood pressure and its complications.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness encourages all persons to practice the following nutrition and health tips:

- Use herbal-based seasonings such as garlic, onions, cilantro, spices, citrus juice, or salt-free seasonings instead of salt and bottled mixed seasonings;
- Avoid processed foods and canned foods;
- Consume fresh fruits and vegetables regularly;
- Maintain physical activity (at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week);
- Manage and control stress levels; and
- Reduce consumption of alcoholic drinks.

Take time to check your blood pressure and follow these simple tips to prevent and control hypertension.

End

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